Futures Consciousness

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Structure of our presentation

1. What is Futures Consciousness? – Sanna
2. How did we develop the Futures Consciousness concept and scale? – Matti
3. FC Profiles: The five dimensions and individuals - Sanna
4. Applications of FC and open questions – Matti
The Five Dimensions of Futures Consciousness

- Concern for Others
- Systems Perception
- Openness to Alternatives
- Time Perspective
- Agency Beliefs

Futures Consciousness is the human capacity to understand, anticipate, prepare for and embrace the future.

- It allows us to
  - project ourselves in potential futures, to adapt to it when it will become the present;
  - project potential futures and adapt our present actions to bring about the ideal future

Ahvenharju, Lalot, Minkkinen & Quiamzade (na)
Futures Consciousness describes human capacity to explore images of the future

Our tendencies, assumptions, biases or mindsets that influence the kinds of images of the future we envision and how we react to them
Scientific articles


2. How did we develop the Futures Consciousness concept and scale?
We synthesized existing concepts in foresight and futures studies...
## Example of seeking similar dimensions

### Dimensions of future consciousness (Öystein Sande 1972)

1. Length
2. Level of interest
3. Optimism
4. Influence
5. Expectations
6. Values

### Prospective attitude (Gaston Berger 1964)

1. Look far away
2. Look breadthwise (interactions)
3. Look in depth
4. Take risks
5. Take care of humanity
We developed a psychometric scale in five steps

1. step
• 160 items
• 540 Americans
• Factorial analysis
• Construct validity
• Reduction of items to 32

2. step
• 32 items
• 590 Americans
• Confirmatory factorial analysis
• Verifying the items -> 30

3. Step
• 59 Americans
• 2nd time
• Temporal validity

4. Step
• 590 Americans
• Other scales
• Predictive validity

5. step
• 400 Finns
• 280 Swiss
• FC + other scales
• Factorial analysis
• Predictive validity

We developed a psychometric scale in five steps
What does the futures consciousness scale measure?

• Individual tendencies and capacities that *can be developed with practice*

• Cognitive, emotional and motivational aspects, but *not behaviour*

• Does not measure awareness of particular trends or images of the future!
3. FC Profiles: The five dimensions and individuals
Time Perspective

Understanding past, present and future and how actions today have consequences in the future

Valuing long-term thinking

- Future discounting & deferring gratification
- Preventing future problems vs. delaying them to the future

- Abstract thinking and creativity
- Simulation reduces discounting effect
Agency Beliefs

Trust in one’s ability to influence future events

Understanding of what can be influenced and how

• Free or fatalistic view of future
• Own beliefs vs. reality

• Positive experiences enhance our beliefs and actions
• Optimism builds trust in our self
Systems Perception

Seeing the interconnectedness within and between human and natural systems

Understanding complex consequences of the decisions we make

• Big picture vs. single issues
• Nature as part of self or separate

• “It does not matter what we do”
Concern for Others

Understanding of the interdependences between all humanity

Motivation to improve life of others, beyond self

Commitment to act according to own morals
- Sacrificing own satisfaction for common good vs. focusing on self
- Identification with world vs. own family

- Combining values and passion
- Empathy is a natural skill that needs practice
Openness to Alternatives

Critical evaluation of alternatives and questioning established truths

Seeing future possibilities broadly and innovatively

- Threats or opportunities
- Tolerance for unknown

- Creativity and curiosity
- Existence bias
Lessons for futures processes – Accept and and build on differences

• Be aware of the challenges of FC for different personalities

• Support individuals to develop their FC during the processes

• Include people with different FC profiles in futures processes

• Utilise simulations and other “mind games” to help people out from their basic mindsets
Collaborative research on the human capacity to understand, anticipate, prepare for, and embrace the future
4. Applications of FC and open questions
What to use it for?

- Educational tool
- Impact assessment
- Research set-ups
Relation to futures skills and competences

• Conceptual work is ongoing
• Tentative proposal: futures consciousness is an underlying basis that enables building skills such as futures literacy
• FC as building blocks for futures skills
Questions for future research

• To what extent does the FC scale apply to different cultural contexts?
• Identification of links, interactions and possible conflicts between the FC dimensions
• Correlations with demographic and sociocultural factors and their explanations
• Identification of typical profiles
• FC as a feature of groups, organizations and societies?
Thank you!
Poll for those who made the FC test

What do you think of your results?
- My results were exactly what I expected
- My results were partly what I expected
- My results were not what I expected
- I got very weird results, do not understand them at all
- Other - can there be an open question?
- I do not know

Did you find your results useful for you? (can choose two if possible)
- Yes, because they made me realise something about myself
- Yes, because they confirmed my thinking that all tests are useless
- Maybe, I have to think about this.
- No, I did not learn anything new about myself
- No, because I do not think my results describe me
- I do not know
FC Profile variations